

## **EMPLOYING TASK-BASED APPROACH TO TEACH TECHNICAL WRITING FOR STUDENTS OF ENGINEERING USING WEB 2.0 TOOLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The field of English Language Teaching in India has undergone many phases and teaching methods have evolved from chalk and board to the use of technology in a language classroom. In the current scenario teachers have to focus mainly on preparing their students for using the skills in real life situations and they have to study students' needs to offer a suitable training. The present study employed a Task-based learning approach to teach Technical writing to first year engineering students. A single group experimental study was conducted with thirty four students of B. S. Abdur Rahman University, a semi-urban university in Tamil Nadu, India. The two collaborative Web 2.0 tools, namely Google Drive and Blogs were used to share the assignments with the learners in order to motivate them to write technical documents. They were encouraged to take part in collaborative activities, peer review and publish their work which ultimately fostered learner autonomy. Learners' knowledge on technical writing skills and technological skills were assessed using two questionnaires. Different methods of data collection like the pre-test, continuous assessments, post-test and participants interviews were adopted to increase the strength and validity of the study. A task-based module was designed to impart training to the samples selected. The findings of the study revealed that TBL approach with the integration of Web 2.0 tools enhances the technical writing skills of engineering students.

**KEYWORDS:** Task, Based Language Learning, Technical Writing, Web 2.0 Tools, Google Drive, Blogs

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Task-Based Language Teaching**

Task based Language Teaching has been considered by many researchers to focus on process writing designed to increase the learner's use of language for the use of communicative purposes.

The aspect of learner training is greatly dependent on the type of activities that are provided to students. It is essential to give real life situations for students to use the language skills and the language teachers have to create opportunities to facilitate the use of language skills. It must be admitted that the preparation of task-based modules offer scope for such usage. According to Wikipedia 'Task-Based Language Teaching' or 'Task Based Learning instruction' (TBI) "focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language." (Task-based Learning languages.dk.n.d.). It was popularized by Prabhu when he dealt with second language pedagogy (Second Language Pedagogy. Online books. library).

Prabhu defines a task as "an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (24). In her study Ruso quotes Willis according to whom "tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (3). Ru so also presented the TBL framework of Willis which provides three basic conditions for language learning namely the pre-task, task- cycle and language focus.

- **Pre-Task:** In this phase the class is introduced to the topic with the words and phrases relating to the topic.
- **Task-Cycle:** This phase allows the learners to use the language they are already familiar with and improve their language with the help of the teacher to complete the task. It gives learners a choice to work in pairs or groups and report their findings to the class.
- **Language Focus:** This condition allows learners to study the specific features that occur in the language used during the task cycle. They examine the language forms in the text and see the meaning of lexical items which they have observed. This phase also enables them to analyze what they have learnt already, thereby broadening their understanding of the knowledge that they have required. It also helps them to practice activities based on the features of language that they have already learnt (3).

It is for these reasons that TBL has been widely used by language teachers across the globe. In her study on 'The influence of Task Based learning in EFL classrooms', Ru so reveals that "TBL enhances students' learning, since the tasks encourage them to involve fully thereby leading to significant improvement in their language performance" (1). A similar view is expressed by Hadi according to whom "EFL teachers can successfully apply TBLT in their classes because the learners are willing to adapt themselves to this new approach of language teaching"(3).

The main objective of this research study was to find out how far the use of Web 2.0 tools would help to improve students' technical writing skills. For this purpose the TBL approach was adopted. It must be also stated that the hypothesis of this research study was, "Students show improvement in technical writing skills when they are trained beyond the classroom with the help of Web 2.0 tools like Google Drive and Blogs."

In order to verify the hypothesis and to train the students in technical writing skills, the researcher designed the task-based module that integrated the use of Web 2.0 tools like Blog and Google Drive.

The objectives of designing the module were,

- To make the students familiar with general and technical vocabulary.
- To enable them to write single sentence definitions and paragraphs.
- To help the learners to learn tense forms by listening to audio files and looking at pictures.
- To encourage them to write extended definitions, note-making and checklist.
- To make students learn adjectives, comparative adjectives and write instructions.
- To enable the students to write recommendations looking at the pictures.
- To train them to interpret pictorial representations like bar charts.
- To encourage learners listen to a news report and write recommendations and describe a process using a flow chart.
- To help students interpret a pie chart and write memos.
- To motivate students to write minutes, a fire accident report and a letter of application with resume.

### **Description of the Training Material Used**

The training module was presented in 11 units on the Technical English tasks that the subjects were learning in a

traditional setup in the English classroom in their first semester. Each unit featured simple to complex Technical writing tasks like vocabulary, definitions, grammar, paragraph writing, interpretation using pictorial representations, note -making, checklists, instructions, recommendations, reports, memos, minutes, and job application letters(Appendix 1). All the units consisted of general objectives to justify the reason for designing the tasks and objectives for the subjects as to realize what they intend to learn and the outcome when they complete the task.

During the study the samples underwent training mainly through Google Drive and Training Blog. Google Drive was used to assign the tasks for all the units from 1 to 11. The subjects answered for units 4, 5, 6 and 7 through blogs and for the other units 1,2,3,8,9,10 and 11 through Google Drive. The experiment continued for three months.

A detailed description of the research material unit- wise that was used for the study is given below. It must be stated that the errors that were identified in grammar, organization and vocabulary in the pre-test were addressed in most of the tasks and related links were given for sufficient practice.

## **UNIT 1**

The overall objectives of this unit were to familiarize students with general and technical vocabulary, to orient them to write complete sentences, to encourage them to understand concepts and to train them in writing definitions relating to technical terms.

### **Task 1**

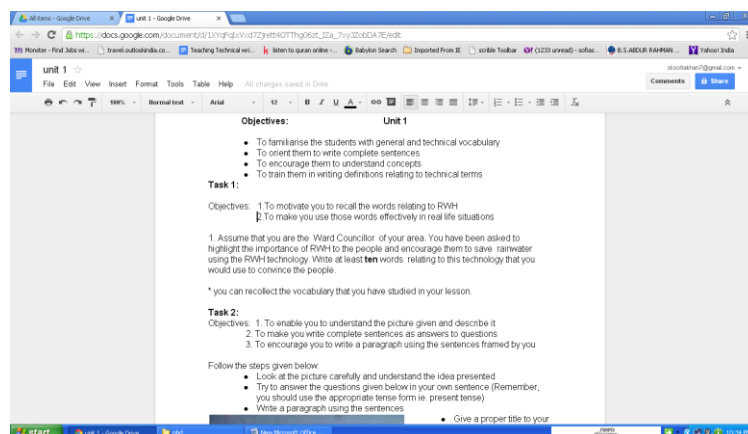
In this task the students were asked to write a minimum of at least ten words relating to Rain water harvesting. This question was chosen to make them recollect the technical vocabulary relating to Rain water harvesting which they had studied earlier from their text book. They were then asked to assume that they were ward councilors of their area and highlight the importance of saving water through this technique. In the given situation they were told to think and write ten words relating to RWH that they would use to convince the people.

### **Task 2**

This task required the students to look at the picture of a plane which did an emergency landing in the river Hudson recently( in 2010) and answer the questions relating to it. They were then asked to combine the answers to write a paragraph. The reason for giving this picture was to enable them to write a paragraph by recalling the recent incident which would help them to organize their ideas into a meaningful paragraph with clarity. Guidelines on using the appropriate tense forms with examples were given to help them write error free sentences thereby addressing the error committed by students in pretest.

### **Task 3**

The objective of this task was to make them define technical terms. It is essential to define a substance, an object or a machine that is being used by a technical person and that definition has to be clear for others to understand it effectively. This task contained ten terms for which the students were required to write definitions.



**Figure 1: The Training Module Designed following the Task-Based Approach in Google Drive**

## UNIT 2

The overall objectives of this unit were to familiarize students with the vocabulary relating to computers, to write an effective paragraph using sequence words and to encourage them to write single sentence definition.

### Task 1

This exercise was a matching task given to make them recollect some of the vocabulary relating to internet and computer. Words like **bug, cache, and browser** were given in column A to match with their meanings in column B.

### Task 2

The objective of this task was to make students write about their daily routine using sequence words and frequency words. An example “An engineering student’s typical day” was provided for describing sequence of events too. They were also asked to watch a video on using sequence words and answer a quiz as part of this task to check their understanding. They had to learn the usage of the words *first, first of all, then, next, after that, last and finally* and some simple instructions using sequence words.

Using the plan and the phrases, students were required to write a paragraph assuming that they were writing an article about their daily routine to a “Youth” magazine.

### Task 3

This task was aimed at enabling students revise what they had learnt about sentence definitions. Here they had to identify the term and fill the blanks in the sentences to learn definitions.

## UNIT 3

The general objectives of this task were to help students learn the various tense forms, motivate them to listen and write vocabulary and encourage them to write a paragraph and extended definitions.

### Task 1

This task focused on making students learn to use the tense forms effectively. Tense forms enable learners to write and speak correctly without any ambiguity. The various tense forms like the Past, Present and the Future tenses were explained with examples. To understand simple present tense the students had to write about their daily activities and underline the present tense verb. To learn present progressive, they were made to imagine that they were commentators in a sports field and describe every action of the players and write a commentary in their own words. To know the usage of

simple past they were asked to assume that they had watched a recent movie or read a book and narrate the story using the past tense form of the verb. For future tense they had to write about their plan to go to a hill station using the verbs 'will' and 'going to'

In this task the errors committed by students in tenses in the pre-test were addressed.

### Task 2

This task expected the students to listen to an audio file and also watch a video on geothermal energy and learn how geothermal energy is produced. They also had to try to find the technical words like *drill holes steam, drive turbines etc.* relating to the production of this energy. So the purpose here was to familiarize them with new vocabulary. They were also exposed to additional information that geothermal energy is an important resource in volcanic active places such as Iceland and Newzealand and has been used for thousands of years in some countries for cooking and heating.

### Task 3

This task was set to develop the paragraph writing skills with the aid of the picture and the hints. To write a good paragraph, one must have a clear outline in order to arrange points in a proper order. In this task students had to look at the picture of a Desalination plant and using the hints, were required to write a paragraph on how a desalination plant works. The hints in the task were intended to connect the given points and to keep to the order in which the points were given.

Some suggestions were given to enable them to organize their paragraphs effectively. These suggestions provided the input the learners required to start a paragraph with a topic sentence, add supporting sentences and end with a concluding sentence. Students were also told that there are different kinds of paragraphs which are narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive. Furthermore, they learnt about common ways to organize paragraphs according to the time order, location order, order of importance, cause-effect order, and comparison-contrast order.

In this way the errors of the students in organizing a paragraph were addressed.

### Task 4

This task dealt with sentence definitions and was intended to help students to revise what they learnt in Unit 2. The purpose of this task was to make learners define a particular term in a sentence. Pictures on a robot, a stadium, a laboratory, an auditorium, a printer and a microscope were given to help them identify the terms and write definitions.

### Task 5

Extended definitions were included in this task because it was believed that they provide more details about the object described. More commonly, extended definitions include examples that illustrate and clarify the term or idea. In this task learners had to define objects like **x-ray, amplifier etc.**, in their own words after reading the explanation given about their features and functions. A sample was also given to help them.

## UNIT 4

The general objectives of this unit was to make students read technical reading materials, to encourage them to write extended definitions and to make them handle note-making and checklist activities.

### Task 1

This task contained sentence definitions which the students have already learnt in Unit 1 and 3. While the previous tasks were simple, the task on sentence definition in Unit 4 required students to access a website to read about planets and

identify the technical terms relating to solar system and write single sentence definitions. They were asked to define words such as **meteors, gas-giants, terrestrial planets** which were relatively new to them. This website was informative as students could learn vocabulary relating to planets, natural satellites, comets, asteroids, ancient astronomers like Copernicus and everything they need to know about the universe. This task had to be independently completed by the students.

### Task 2

This task was designed as a collaborative task for students to write extended definitions through blogs. It was designed in such a way that they could use the comment feature in the blogs to revise or edit their answers. Apart from writing extended definitions on **volcanic eruptions, eco system and bacterial decomposition** students gained information on what causes acid rain, its effects on the environment and prevention. They also learnt that the term was first discovered by an English scientist named Robert Agnus in 1852.

### Task 3

This task required learners to make notes. Note making is a skill which requires understanding the concept in a passage and finding out the main points and additional points. Here the idea was to condense only the important information. In order to take/make notes effectively one needs to be an active reader. Note making is important as it helps to organize thoughts, to follow the argument of the writer, to internalize new ideas/information. A weblink <http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fgyanguru.org%2Flearn-note-making-cbse%2F> was provided for students to learn the technique of note-making and that helped them to write notes on 'Bird Migration' with appropriate sub headings.

### Task 4

In this task, the students learned to use interrogative forms to write checklists. A checklist is a list of items that people use to verify whether everything is in order before any important activity is taken up. Interrogative pronouns are used for asking questions and students learn to make use of interrogatives to design questions and make use auxiliaries like 'Are, Do, Does, Has and Have', followed by the subject. This task required the students to use appropriate auxiliaries for the checklist on a Holiday travel. A few samples on using interrogatives and auxiliaries were given through the website which dealt with them. An online test was conducted to test the students on the correct usage of interrogatives and auxiliaries. In this way the mistakes made by them in this grammatical aspect was addressed.

## UNIT 5

The general objectives of this unit were to make students learn Adjectives and comparative adjectives, to encourage them to make notes, to train them to write checklists and to orient them on writing instructions.

### Task 1

This task was designed to help students understand adjectives and comparative adjectives. While adjectives are used to form the different degrees of comparison, comparative adjectives are used to compare the difference between two nouns and collective nouns. They learnt the definition of adjectives, its position, degrees of adjectives, premodifiers with degrees of adjectives, collective adjectives, adjectival opposites, etc., in this task. One particular website <http://www.learnenglish.de/PictureIt/adjectivesinpictures.htm> which was given as reference enabled them to learn about comparative adjectives through pictures. After knowing what they ought to know about comparatives, the learners had to look at the three pictures in the task and write as many sentences they can using comparative adjectives. So this task provided them the additional help they needed to minimize the errors they made in adjectives in the pre-test.

**Task 2**

Task 2 was given to enable the students to make notes after reading a passage and give a title and subtitles. This was a revision of note-making task which was already discussed in Unit 4. While the previous unit required them to write only the sub heading, this task required them to make notes and also give a title and a sub title. A reading passage on 'Nanotechnology products' was given for this purpose. Students were also informed to refer to the previous unit in order to learn how to make notes, whenever they needed assistance.

**Task 3**

This task was given to train learners to write a checklist using appropriate words. They were expected to work on eight questions to write a set of imaginary checklist as a preparation for their sister's wedding with a suitable title.

**Task 4**

In this task the students were encouraged to write instructions. Instructions find an important place in Technical writing. Instructions have to be clear, precise, understandable, complete and user-friendly. The task included ten sentences, which students had to go through and identify those which were given as instructions. Tips to write instructions beginning with the imperative verb, made them to complete the task with ease.

**UNIT 6**

The general objectives of this unit were to train students to write instructions, to enable them to write checklists, and to make them write notes from a passage.

**Task 1**

In this task, the students were asked to refer to Unit 5 for guidelines to write instructions. From a passage on the prevention of mosquito bites and the vaccines and medicines available, the students were asked to write ten instructions to be followed for the prevention of malaria.

**Task 2**

As mentioned earlier, checklist is a systematic record wherein an individual prepares a list of things that he needs to check before he/she proceeds on an important venture.

In this task the students had to imagine that they were travelling to Delhi and prepare a checklist of the things they needed to look out for when they are on a holiday. They were asked to refer to a website on Delhi Travel Tips. This site gave them the information they required about the ideal time to visit Delhi, the necessary arrangements to be made well in advance, the safety procedures to be followed etc. Using this information they were asked to prepare a checklist.

**Task 3**

In this task the students had to make notes giving a title, subtitle, and the main points on the pictures sent by NASA on Solar Tsunami. This note making task was a slightly complex one compared to tasks they had attempted in the previous units. They were asked to read a one page article on solar tsunami reported by Foxnews.com and make notes. The students also learned additional information on geomagnetic storms. This website gave an insight on the astonishing new pictures from NASA that showed the giant flares and clouds of ionized gas erupting from the star. They also got to see the videos. The sixteen images relating to 'The sun as you have never seen it before' showed the eruptions on the sun's surface that could blast tons of plasma into space. The advantage of using Web 2.0 tool was evident here as it facilitated the

learning among students.

## **UNIT 7**

The general objectives of this unit were to enable students to write instructions, recommendations as part of technical writing activity.

### **Task 1**

In this task the students learned to write instructions once again. The you tube included in this task helped them to write instructions. Students had to watch a video on how air pollution affects the health of children in California. It included interviews of parents and doctors on the children suffering from diseases caused by pollutions too. Based on the content presented in the video students were asked to write ten instructions on the prevention of health from air pollution.

### **Task 2**

Task 2 included recommendations. A technical writer gives recommendations for the readers to take necessary steps to carry out a related activity and it is normally written by using modal verbs. The students were asked to look at the five pictures below and write five recommendations to save water.

## **UNIT 8**

The general objectives of this unit were to enable the students to write recommendations and train them to interpret pictorial representations.

### **Task 1**

The students were already familiar with writing recommendations, which they had studied in the previous units. This task required them to write twelve recommendations relating to airline travel safety. They were asked to access the website that actually provided instructions for air travelers and advice on other related issues like customer guide, airline health, airline directory and so on. The students were asked to read through the instructions and modify them into recommendations by adding suitable structures and phrases.

### **Task 2**

The objective of Task 2 was to familiarize students with bar charts and the way the data in the bar chart is interpreted. In technical writing, visual aids accomplishes conciseness and clarity. This task aimed at educating students about interpretation of a bar chart and so a few sample bar charts and the description of the interpretation of data were given.

## **UNIT 9**

The general objectives of this unit was to motivate students to write recommendations by listening to a news report, to enable them to interpret a bar chart and to make them describe a process.

### **Task 1**

This task was designed to motivate students to write a set of recommendations after listening to and watching the BBC News report. They were asked to select any one of the reports of their choice and write recommendations. Most of the students wrote recommendations on the floods in Pakistan(2010) on the matters concerning safety precautions, outbreak of diseases and so on. Even news relating to national issues was suggested for writing recommendations.

**Task 2**

Task 2 contained a bar chart on ‘The introduction of compulsory foreign language in India since 1992’. Students were already familiar with bar charts from Unit 8. A picture of a bar chart on the introduction of French and German languages was given to the students which they had to interpret using words of comparison and contrast and write a paragraph. They were once again reminded of how to organize a paragraph in order to avoid the mistakes they made in pre-test.

**Task 3**

In this task students had to learn how to describe a process using sequence words. They had already learnt how to write a paragraph using sequence words in Unit 2. First they were asked to go through a sample process description relating to the removal of contaminants from water besides the general tips on process description. In continuation with this, they were asked to watch the video on the YouTube on ‘The process of changing a car tyre’ and then describe the process in their own words.

**UNIT 10**

The general objectives of this unit were to help students to interpret a pie chart, enable them to describe a process and to train them to write memos.

**Task 1**

In Task 1 the students were asked to look at the picture of a pie chart and interpret it. The aim of including a Pie chart was to expose the students to the aspect of interpreting a data, which is common in business scenario. In the task, two pie charts showing the highest level of education of women in India in 1945 and 1995 were given. The students were asked to and compare and contrast the information in them using words like ‘while, but, whereas’ etc., which were also given as tips in the task itself.

**Task 2**

This task required the students to interpret a flow chart and describe a process using sequence words like first, next, then, finally etc. They had to describe two flowcharts in the task in about 100 words. In one flowchart they had to describe the nature of the receptionist’s work and in the other one they had to describe the process involved in painting a house.

**Task 3**

This task required students to write memos. Business communication involves writing memos to subordinates and supervisors to convey messages with brevity. Students were informed that the first sentence should explain its purpose and the second sentence should outline the main ideas. They were also told that simple words, readable sentences, specific details, and highlighting techniques are used to write an effective memo.

As part of the task, the students were given the basic formats, parts of a memo, examples of persuasive, directive and technical memos. They were also asked to differentiate between memos and letters through an example. A sample template was given so that the learners could use it to complete the task assuming that they were the members of anti-ragging committee in the university. They were asked to write a memo saying that strict disciplinary action would be taken against those who indulge in ragging.

## Unit 11

The general objectives of this final unit were to train students to write minutes of a meeting, to make them aware of the different types of reports and to enable them to write job application letters

### Task 1

In this task the students had to write the minutes of a meeting which is an integral part of any business communication. Minutes are recorded in a meeting for future reference and helps the participant sand those who did not attend to know the points that were discussed in the meeting.

First the students were given the guidance on how to write minutes. For example, they were told to use the agenda as a guideline, to describe the role of those attending the meeting, to highlight the objectives of the meeting and to write the decisions taken at the end of the meeting. They were also given a format in order to facilitate their writing activity.

In the task, students were asked to assume that they were engineers working in Global Softwares Pvt Ltd. They had attended a meeting in which the topics relating to the firm's growth, profit and loss incurred, steps to boost up the sales, and about the employees' benefit scheme were discussed. Based on the discussion they were instructed to write minutes of the meeting.

### Task 2

The students had to learn to write the fire accident report in this task.

A few sample reports on accidents were given to students. Then a picture of a car that had caught fire was provided in the task and students had to write the accident report on the fire, the cause and suggest preventive measures to be taken to avoid further damage. The format for writing the accident report was discussed in the class and students were asked to follow that format. This task gave them practice in writing an accident report.

### Task 3

In this last task of the training module, the researcher wanted her students to know the importance of drafting a Letter of Application with resume. In order to do that, a sample resume and letter of application were provided along with an advertisement for job. The students were first asked to go through the samples. Then they had to assume that they were applying for the job ( found in the advertisement)and draft their letter of application and resume.

## METHODOLOGY

### Training Imparted Through Task-Based Module

After the pre-test, between the third and fourth week of September, the training module was shared to the samples through Google Drive. The training continued for nearly three months during which the students' were closely monitored and their answers analyzed and posted in the spreadsheets (Appendix2). In this context, it is worthwhile to state that the training was provided beyond the class hours, in order to supplement the regular instruction, which was offered in the traditional classroom.

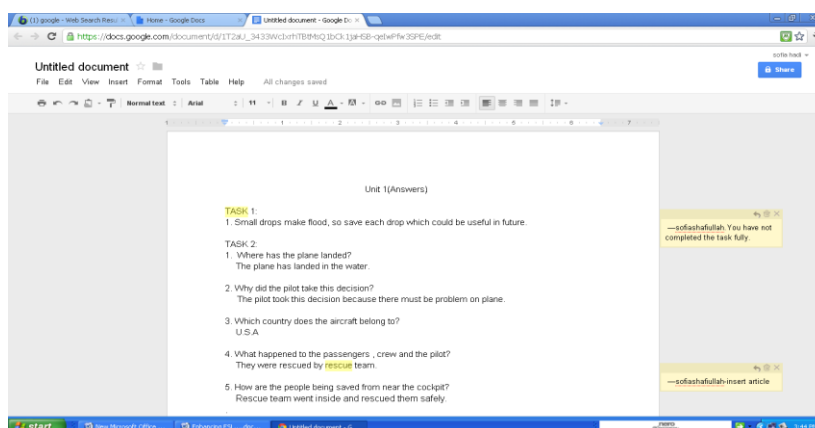
The research study focused on training students in technical writing, that form part of Technical English course offered in the first semester. The aim of the Technical English course is to encourage students to actively involved in participative learning of target language (English) and to help them acquire communication skills. The syllabus in Technical writing includes paragraph writing, definitions, process description, comparison and contrast, bar charts, pie charts, flowcharts, use of discourse markers, formal letters, cause and effect, purpose and function expressions,

instructions, recommendations, checklists, and note-making. In the writing class the students usually have ten writing assignments like interpreting the bar chart, flow chart and pie chart, letter of application with resume, business letters, note taking and note making, instructions, recommendations, checklists, and memo and minutes.

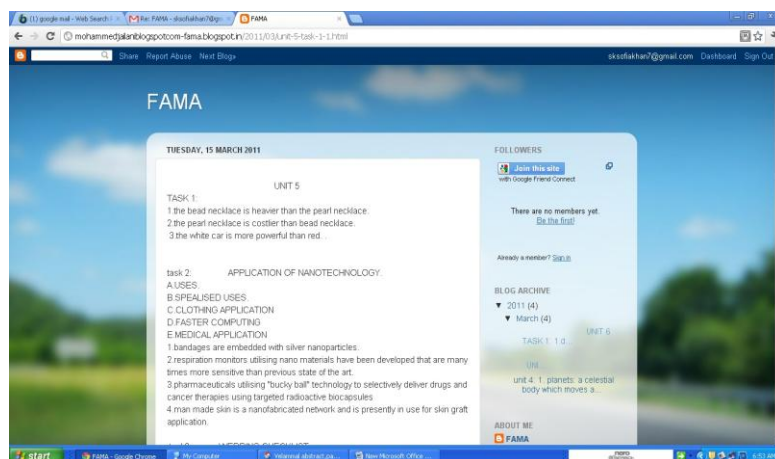
As mentioned in page 2, the tasks were designed into 11 units comprising from simple to complex tasks like definitions, technical vocabulary, tense forms, adjectives, note-making, recommendations, instructions, checklists, memos, minutes bar charts, pie charts fire accident reports, job application etc. Initially only one unit was assigned to the samples in the beginning. This was because they were going to work online in the Google Drive for the first time and they require time to adopt themselves in using new technology. So the tasks in unit 1 were also simple. For example, the subjects were motivated to use general and technical vocabulary effectively in real life situations. They were asked to recall and write simple vocabulary relating to Rain Water Harvesting which they had studied in their text book. A picture was given as prompt in the second task to elicit answers and then write as a paragraph. The picture given was that of a plane which accidentally landed in river Hudson in 2010. The prior knowledge that the participants had on these two tasks made them complete the tasks with ease. Almost all the students shared their answers using the sharing option in the Google Drive with the researcher. They took nearly ten days to complete this unit instead of a week's time that was given to them.

Next, units 2, 3 were sent through Google Drive. Unit 2, task 2 also focused on a simple task where they had to write about their daily routine to a 'Youth' magazine using sequence words. This task was designed in order to motivate them to write what they were doing everyday as part of their daily schedule. As expected they responded well to this task. unit 3 task 3 required them to watch a you tube video on Geothermal energy and find technical words relating to it. Students exhibited interest in watching this video, which would not have been possible in their regular English class. The same interest was observed in the next task where they had to look at a picture of a desalination plant and the hints below to write a paragraph on it.

To complete all these tasks, the participants were instructed to share their work with each other in Google Drive and edit each other's work. Since the training was given in the university library and the women's hostel, the researcher was able to closely monitor their work. She saw them expressing surprise and wonder when the names of their classmates working on the same document appeared on the screen and when their work was saved automatically. The features of Google Drive which are in some way similar to Microsoft Document enabled them to work confidently as the training progressed. They checked their errors in grammar and spelling in their document. They edited their writing and provided feedback for others' work. They reworked on their assignments upon receiving comments and viewed the revision history in the Google Drive to make any changes before finally sharing them with the researcher for an effective online feedback.



**Figure 2: This is a Screen Capture of Students' Work that was Finished through Google Drive. This Figure Shows the Collaborative Feature of Google Drive**



**Figure 3: Screen Capture of the Comments given by a Student in a Peer Group through a Blog**

The researcher designed the training modules in such a way that the majority of the tasks appeared in more than one unit to enable the students to recall what they had studied in the previous units. This served as a revision and helped them to do the tasks better. The errors that were observed in the pre-test were addressed in the tasks also. The task 2 in Unit 1 contained some guidelines and examples on the usage of tense forms. Students were made to complete some exercises relating to verbs, interrogatives, and other related grammar in Unit 3, task 1. In order to write an effective paragraph, instructions were given to learn the techniques in organizing a paragraph in Unit 3 task 3. Students were also trained in online vocabulary tasks in Unit 2 task 1. it is worthwhile to state that this training was quite different from the training given in an conventional English class, as some additional inputs and information were given through links and resources.

After the completion of the first three units, a continuous assessment test was conducted to check the progress of the participants. The questions in the test covered the portions taught in the first three units. Improvement was observed in the performance of all the students. Those who had committed errors in the pre-test showed a good improvement which was a very encouraging sign for the researcher to proceed with her training. The results of all the three continuous assessments are presented graphically in Appendix 4.

Soon after the first continuous assessment, Units 4, 5, 6 and 7 were administered. Students were instructed to work on blogs to complete these units. For Unit 4, the participants worked on tasks like definitions, note-making and checklists. They also had to access to some suggested websites to complete the tasks. The tasks in Unit 5 were based on adjectives and writing instructions following the given examples. In task 2 of this unit also, the pre-test errors in auxiliaries, adjectives and comparative adjectives were addressed. Thus most of the errors committed by the students in the pre-test were addressed initially before the commencement of the training and also during the training within the first five Units of the module itself so as to enable them to perform well later.

Task 3 in Unit 6 was a slightly complex one for which the students had to make notes reading the information on Solar Tsunami. Some of them did not attempt this task very well as they were not able to condense all the information. However the samples found the tasks in Unit 7 to be easy as it contained recommendations and instructions. With regard to working on blogs to complete these four units, though at first students were a little apprehensive, they later realized the importance of contributing through Blogs and that have given them the freedom to express their ideas. They were conscious that their friends were reading their work and tried to improve their writing. As mentioned earlier, some units were shared through Blogs and more units through Google Drive. They thus learnt the collaborative features of Google Drive and Blogs and gradually enjoyed working with them.

The second continuous assessment test was conducted after the students were trained in making notes, instructions, recommendations, checklists and definitions in Units 4 to 7. Once again a steady improvement in writing was observed in the performance of the research participants.

The last set of units from 8 to 11 contained complex tasks like report writing, interpreting pie charts, flow charts, bar charts, process description, memos, minutes and job application letters with resumes. Students were instructed to complete all these tasks in Google Drive. In unit 8 task 2, students learnt to interpret a bar chart using words of comparison and contrast. In unit 9, task 1, listening skills were also integrated into writing skills as subjects were required to listen to a news item in BBC news and write eight recommendations. Task 2 required them to watch the video on the youtube, listen to the process description and write a paragraph in about 100 words. In unit 10, they wrote memos and in unit 11, they wrote an accident report looking at the picture of a car which had caught fire. In this unit, they also completed a job application letter along with a resume. On using Google Drive, it was observed that the students engaged themselves in an online dialogue and inserted comments using the different font styles and colours.

The third continuous assessment was conducted in the portions relating to units 8, 9, 10 and 11 which again showed improvement in the performance of the sample students which meant that the training given to them in Technical writing using Google Drive and Blogs was successful. Subjects were encouraged to use both the tools for effective training. For each completed unit, feedback and comments were given to the learners by the researcher online. She has also posted them in the spreadsheets.

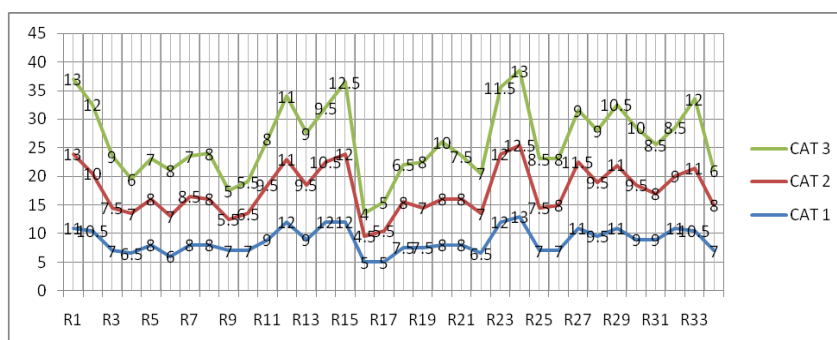


Figure 4: Results of the Continuous Assessment Tests

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus the task-based module was prepared for training the selected students in technical writing with the help of the Web 2.0 tools Blogs and Google Drive. The findings and conclusions of the study reveal the effectiveness of implementing task-based learning approach in a technical writing class. Classroom learning is important for learning to take place and carefully designed tasks with the aid of Web 2.0 tools can provide an enjoyable learning experience for student

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